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NOTES ON PAINTINGS BY DIAZ & DUPRÉ IN THE COLLECTION OF WILLIAM T. WALTERS, ESQ.



ARCISSE DIAZ when quite an old man visited the house of M. Wolff. Attracted to a small panel on the wall, he stood in front of it, seemed deeply interested and was seen to wipe tears from his face. Turning to M. Wolff he asked, "Would you be good enough to sell me this picture?—it belongs to a part of my youth." "I can not sell it to you," was the reply,—“but since you value it, allow me to offer it to you.” Diaz took the little gem from the wall and with a face radiant with joy carried it away without loss of time.

The subject, a woman and child, was his wife and child. The baby lay in a cradle and the wife, while rocking it, had fallen asleep. The artist, struck with the beauty of the incident, painted it while they yet slumbered. The picture hung over the artist's bed for years and was greatly treasured.

One day when the clouds were more than heavy a dealer came; seeing the little picture he at once desired to possess it and named a sum. The artist wished to keep it and offered anything he possessed for a like sum. Nothing but this picture would answer. The rent was due the following day and there was nothing with which to meet it. Diaz gave him a receipt for his money, but the dealer never realized that he was carrying away with him a piece of the artist's heart. This is but an incident in the life of one of the great men of 1830.

Whatever defects you may find in his works, in realms of color he ranks as one of the first.

In comparison with contemporaries he does not strike you

WALTER'S  
COLLECTION

"The Storm"  
by  
DIAZ

"Diaz was above all  
an improvisatore  
and a creator of  
fantasie"  
Albert Wolff

with the force that some of them do. Others were more positive in their assertions, but in his pictures you always find a quiet charm which appeals with such tenderness that their beauty seems to blend with your own nature and more than compensates for their lack in strength of handling.

There are many pictures by Diaz in this collection, both landscape and figure. The largest of his paintings in the gallery, "The Storm," is a wonderful rendition of one of Nature's most sullen moods. Dark gray clouds envelope the sky, clouds torn, ragged, twisting and tumbling in myriads of fantastic forms. Gloom like a pall settles over everything. The upper sky is light, over which bits of wild dark clouds fly. Along the horizon is a light that is wonderfully true in value, keeping away back in the far distance and of that strange weird color that is a peculiarity of a storm swept sky. The distance is somber, vague and indistinct and of a subdued purplish, blue gray tone, grading off into the warmer colors of the mid-distance, which become more positive under the half light. Near the front of the picture a ray of sunlight falls gently on the ground, giving it a warm, ochre, yellow-green hue; the edges, melting into the shadow tints by tender gradations, merge into the deep somber tint of the foreground.

Just back of this, slender young trees reach out from among some rocks that break up the surface of the plain, while here and there small pools of water, catching bits of reflected color from the sky, give beautiful accentuated notes to the foreground. Brown, gray, russet, green, olive, purplish brown are thrown together with charming sympathy, making up a medley of color that is delightful. A peasant passing over the plains is bent by the velocity of the winds. This figure comes darkly against the light spot in the foreground and underneath and through this great picture there is a warm brownish red tone. It is a realization of one of Nature's most sublime moods and while you do not find the confidence of Dupré or Rousseau, you see the same deep feeling that you find in Millet.

*I speak now  
of his landscapes,  
for in this artist  
I find two  
distinct personalities,  
the landscapist and  
the painter of  
figures*

R. B. G.

*"When October comes,  
go to the heights of  
the valley of the  
Salle, or in the thickets  
of Bas-Breau;  
wander in the midst  
of this superb and  
lusty vegetation,  
under the trees,  
species of immense  
bouquets glittering with  
a thousand colors,  
where play all  
shades, the dark green,  
the brown, the  
golden yellow, the  
bright scarlet;  
and, seeing this  
magnificent twinkling  
of autumn tints,  
you will surprise  
yourself by saying,  
'Behold, Diaz!'"*

Roger Ballu

Step just across the room and you will see one of the most remarkable landscapes ever painted, "The Old Oak," by Julien Dupré. It is a small canvas, yet it is full of the grandeur and largeness of nature.

No painter ever lived who had greater power over materials than he. Gifted with great feeling, he enjoyed the closest relationship with nature. Quitting the decoration of pottery, he went directly to her. She was his master, his only school. Unhampered by the traditions of the schools, he painted with a directness, a sureness that was unknown until his coming. M. Wolff says of him, "He was the pathfinder of modern landscape art."

Instead of grotesque imitations of Poussin he gave the grand inspiration that came from a loving devotion to nature, and from him dates everything that finally ripened into the greatest school of landscape painters of modern times—yes, any time! —the Barbizon school.

In this picture Dupré has painted nature in a grand and exalted mood. The sky is one of the most remarkable ever painted. Here you have the pure ethereal blue with all its richness, depth and beauty. Across this wonderful blue sky are bits of clouds lighted by a pale golden light that clings as though it would linger always. The approaching autumn, the lateness of the hour, the massing of shadows, all go towards making a composition that would give full sway to the marvelous powers of the artist as a colorist. In the mid-distance are the trees, coming against the sky in somber purple, russet and russet green, in whose shadowy masses you see but dimly a peasant cottage. The coloring of the foreground is strong and rich in its purity. Brown, russet, yellow, violet, deep blues with dark and luscious greens make up a harmonious whole that baffles description. A small pool of water from which cows drink, a bit of clay bank on which the light falls, is turned into burnished gold. Starting up from center of the picture, leaning slightly to the left,

WALTER'S  
COLLECTION

"The Old Oak"

by  
DUPRÉ

"It is the work  
that leans  
directly on nature  
that outlives  
the fashions"  
Wolff

"The day when  
Dupre should open  
his studio without  
a thrill and leave  
without discouragement  
he would consider  
that he had arrived  
at the end of what  
he could do—  
and he would be right"  
Wolff

WALTER'S  
COLLECTION

"The Old Oak"

by  
DUPRÉ

stands an old oak. Spreading out its friendly branches, it stands a silent sentinel of the past. The wonderful charm of color is perhaps displayed in this picture as finely as in any picture in existence. The wonderful mystery of shadow, the wonderful lingering light, the indistinctness yet great power and force with which everything is painted make it a picture from which great inspiration may be drawn.

"Dupré is  
the Beethoven  
of landscape"  
Corot

A number of artists met together were discussing the merits of both Rousseau and Dupré. It was agreed that each should paint a picture and they would then decide who possessed the greatest power—this picture was the result. Dupré won the honor. He was a constant friend of Rousseau's and bought many of his pictures. He was the first of this great school and lived to see them all pass from the scene. Surrounded by many of these brightest gems, Julien Dupré loved to tell the story of the struggles each had shared, over which each had triumphed.

Linked together by a golden thread, these men were like bees that fly from thistle to rose, gathering the pollen, then distributing it from one to the other, bring them all into closer relationship. Likewise this brotherhood of painters, being sensitive to all varied moods of nature, touches the human heart and brings lessons from the fields, "making the world more akin."

R. B. GRUELLE



The picture should have its own merit and not depend upon dramatic, or legendary, or local interest. As music is the poetry of sound, so is painting the poetry of sight, and the subject-matter has nothing to do with harmony of sound or color.

The great musicians knew this. Beethoven and the rest wrote music—simply music.

WHISTLER